(c) what steps are being taken to further streamline the issuing of passports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The minimum time limit for issue of passport is one day under Tatkaal Scheme. The maximum time limit for issuance of passports depends upon the time taken for clear Police Verification Report subject to completion of all formalities and documentation.

(b) In 2004, for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Tatkaal passports were issued within 3 days. Ordinary fresh passports were issued within 50 to 55 days in Uttar Pradesh on an average, and in case of Bihar, the average time taken was 35 days. Maximum time taken was subject to Police verification and completion of all formalities.

(c) A system of process re-engineering has been started in all passport offices, resulting in quicker processing of the application forms. The time slabs for issuing passports under Tatkaal Scheme have been revised to 1 to 10 days and 11 to 20 days. Ministry has also decided to issue full validity passport for 10 years under Tatkaal scheme and in cases of duplicate passports, or passport booklets due to change in appearance, name, date of birth, place of birth, signatures or when pages are exhausted, irrespective of the validity of existing passports. The Ministry of Home Affairs has also been requested to direct State Police authorities to complete Police Verification procedures within a period of two weeks.

Visit of Sri Lankan President to India

1156. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI LALIT SURI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether President of Sri Lanka visited India in June last;

(b) if so, the nature of talks held between the two Governments during her visit;

(c) whether any agreements/treaties were signed; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir. The President of Sri Lanka

visited India on June 2-4, 2005.

(b) The whole range of bilateral issues and other matters of mutual interest were discussed.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Minister's Sri Lanka visit

1157. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he visited Sri Lanka during the month of June, 2005;

(b) if so, whether aim was to enhance trade and economic cooperation between the two countries;

(c) whether the two countries recently decided to conclude negotiations on a comprehensive economic partnership agreement by end of 2005 so as to give a new thrust to bilateral business activity;

(d) if so, what was outcome of the visit;

(e) what were the agreements reached between the two countries; and

(f) what steps are being taken to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir. The Minister of External Affairs visited Sri Lanka on June 9-11, 2005.

(b) The purpose of the visit was to discuss the whole range of bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest. Ways of enhancing trade and economic cooperation featured prominently in these discussions.

(c) It has been agreed that it is desirable to conclude the negotiations by the end of 2005.

(d) It was noted during the visit that the negotiations for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement are progressing satisfactorily. The negotiators have been asked to expedite the remaining work keeping in mind the desirability of concluding negotiations by the end of 2005.